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India

Vodafone Essar launches Kirusa's Voice SMS

Vodafone Essar has launched Voice SMS service in 16 circles across India, enabling customers to send a Voice SMS message to a mobile subscriber anywhere in India, for a fixed price of 75 paise (\$US0.01) per minute.

The Voice SMS service is available to both prepaid and postpaid subscribers. Vodafone Essar has brought the service to market using the Voice SMS solution from Kirusa which has deployed its Voice SMS application, integrated with HP OpenCall Media Platform, across the Vodafone network.

According to Kirusa, "Voice SMS is an enhanced mode of communication enriched with the sender's voice, language and emotions, and offers complete flexibility in retrievals."

The service does not require any special handsets, or handset settings. To send a message, a Vodafone subscriber simply dials * and the mobile number of the intended recipient, speaks for 30 seconds and disconnects. If the recipient is a Vodafone subscriber, he will receive a text SMS notification and can dial 0 to hear the Voice SMS.

Old Voice SMS can be retrieved by dialing 1. The recipient also has the option of replying, forwarding, saving or deleting Voice SMS messages.

Subscribers who are not on Vodafone network will get a text SMS notification with an embedded DirectListen number which, when dialled, takes them to the message directly.

The message recipient can select to reply after listening to the Voice SMS. Listening to the Voice SMS for the first time is free of charge. Subsequent retrieval of a Voice SMS is charged at 75 paise per minute. Replying to and forwarding a Voice SMS will also be charged at 75 paise.

SINGAPORE

Australian research enhances ship-to-shore WiFi mesh

NICTA, Australia's information and communications technology research centre of excellence, has joined Singapore's Institute for Infocomm Research (I2R) to demonstrate a prototype wireless mesh network for maritime traffic.

Under a six-month agreement, NICTA will use its 'go-anywhere' router technology to supply satellite connectivity for the I2R network, which provides data and voice communications between a collection of mobile nodes on ships and land-based networks.

The I2R network is designed to provide communications to port authorities, container terminals and other ships by WiMax inter-ship connectivity. However, if bad weather or distance makes the connectivity unavailable, an affordable satellite alternative is needed.

"When shore mesh nodes cannot be reached, traffic will be directed to the mesh node on a ship which has a satellite connection," explains NICTA project leader Dr Roksana Boreli.

"As standard VoIP and data transport techniques don't work well with satellite communications, the mesh system will use NICTA's mobile routers to handle satellite connectivity in these cases. This allows the traffic to reach its destination by going through the mesh either directly to shore or via the router and the satellite system."

I2R's maritime mesh technology project aims to deliver a 6Mbps ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore mesh communication system over distances up to 20kms and capable of ad hoc multi-hop communication with other vessels and shore command stations.

I2R will seek to develop the system to serve multiple applications such as general voice and data communications, messaging, surveillance and navigational safety. "If the research outcomes are successful, trials will be conducted to further validate the system," said I2R's programme manager for high speed maritime mesh networks, Dr Jaya Shankar.

"This is an important international research collaboration that offers NICTA the opportunity to use some of its leading technology in an innovative way," said NICTA's CEO Dr David Skellern. "By working together, NICTA and I2R have a stronger chance of developing a robust maritime communications network capable of serving the world's busiest ports."

China

China consumers one third of global semiconductor output

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers' annual review of the semiconductor industry in China, electronics manufacturers in the Chinese market consumed more than one-third of semiconductors produced globally for the first time ever.

"China has clearly become the dominant consumer of semiconductors with the total consumption estimated at \$US88 billion in 2007. China reached the one third consumption milestone much faster than previously forecast. In fact, the nation's consumption of semiconductors grew by 23 percent last year," PWC said. "This is the third consecutive year that China's semiconductor consumption has exceeded all other global markets."

However, according to Raman Chitkara, global semiconductor leader at PricewaterhouseCoopers, "growth in production of semiconductors in China is not keeping pace with consumption, resulting in a widening gap between consumption and production of semiconductors in that market. While the Chinese government is implementing initiatives in the hope of increasing local production, we predict that this disparity is likely to continue in the near future."

According to the report, growth in exports is the dominant driver of consumption of semiconductors in China. About 69 percent of semiconductors consumed in China in 2007 were used in various electronics products manufactured for export, up from 64 percent in 2005.

While the number and size of Chinese semiconductor companies is increasing, the Chinese semiconductor industry remains widely scattered with no dominant players, PWC says. However, this is likely to change as the Chinese semiconductor industry further matures within the next five years with the likely emergence of a dominant player in the market.

The study noted that buying decisions for semiconductors consumed by the electronics manufacturing industry in China are often made outside the country with the majority of such purchasing taking place in Taiwan and Japan.

PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts that as the Chinese industry matures, this business practice will diminish. Such a change will disproportionately benefit the companies with greater local presence in China.

The study also noted that, while many of the largest semiconductor suppliers to the Chinese market are multinational companies, 32 of the top 70 global suppliers have

below average market penetration in China, the fastest growing semiconductor market in the world.

"Over the near term, established multinational semiconductor companies may find an unparalleled market opportunity in China, but over the long term the widening gap between consumption and production of semiconductors represents a domestic industry void that will inevitably be filled," Chitkara said.

"What many people are anxious to find out is whether the gap between consumption and production will be filled by the transfer and expansion of multinational companies or the emergence and growth of significant Chinese semiconductor companies."

Nokia reaffirms its commitment to TD-SCDMA

Nokia has reaffirmed its commitment to TD-SCDMA, at the Mobile Asia Congress in Macau.

Colin Giles, president of Nokia China, said at the event: "Nokia firmly supports the development of TD-SCDMA. Our goal is to not only develop TD-SCDMA products that can deliver outstanding user experiences to consumers, but also to work with operators, chipset providers, developers and all parties along the value chain to support the creation of a vibrant TD-SCDMA ecosystem in China."

Nokia has started the development of a TD-SCDMA device based on S60 on Symbian OS, and plans to launch the product before the end of 2009.

Nokia claimed that, "by launching the S60-based TD-SCDMA device, Nokia combines Symbian's massive resources with the market opportunities provided by TD-SCDMA. There are currently over 10,000 third-party S60 on Symbian OS applications commercially available.

"The current S60 on Symbian OS applications will be compatible with S60-based TD-SCDMA devices, offering enriched experiences to China's TD-SCDMA users."

"We are very excited to hear Nokia's announcement today," Wang Jianzhou, chairman and CEO of China Mobile, said. "Symbian OS is a mature and leading global mobile device platform, and we believe that the Nokia TD-SCDMA device will enhance our application offerings and user experiences. We look forward to working together with Nokia to further drive TD-SCDMA development in China."

"The Symbian platform is an engine for open innovation in the mobile ecosystem, and a driver of mobile and Internet convergence," concluded Colin Giles. "With the development of Symbian-based applications and services, it will not only benefit the TD-SCDMA industry, but also facilitate 3G services in China."

Malaysia

Celcom chooses NeuStar for inter-operator IM support

Celcom has selected NeuStar to deliver a range of 'interconnect-ready' mobile instant messaging (IM) services.

Using NeuStar's suite of IM solutions and broad range of client software for mobile devices Celcom's customers will have instant access to Yahoo! Messenger from their mobile handsets.

Celcom's own-branded IM service will allow subscribers to build their own IM communities and enable them to communicate over IM regardless of whether they are currently a member of any particular Internet IM community.

Celcom will be able to extend interoperability to other operator networks in Malaysia using NeuStar's interconnect platform and hub, thus enabling any mobile phone user in Malaysia to communicate with any mobile phone user through mobile IM.

This supports the GSMA's Personal IM initiative for operators to build on the success of SMS and create one interconnected global IM community.

Celcom CEO, Dato' Sri Shazalli Ramly, said: "We saw a great opportunity in mobile IM, and our relationship with NeuStar has helped to make it a reality. Our customers enjoy IM on the PC, and we know they will enjoy being able to IM each other using their mobile phones regardless of what community they are in."

Guenter Krauss, general manager of NeuStar next generation messaging, said: "The success of SMS demonstrates that mobile IM will generate significant revenues, and an interconnected solution provides a wide opportunity for all operators to benefit. NeuStar's vision is a world where everyone can instantly communicate, regardless of community, device, location, or network. The coming together of all operators in Malaysia will be a welcome development."

Hong Kong

PCCW launches first CDMA2000 network

PCCW-HKT has launched a CDMA2000 mobile service in Hong Kong, the fifth 3G mobile network in Hong Kong and the first CDMA2000 network, in addition to the four -CDMA networks licensed in 2001.

At launch the new network offers services in the golden bowl areas covering the Kowloon peninsula and the northern part of Hong Kong Island. Coverage will be extended to the airport, Mass Transit Railway stations, road tunnels and border control points.

"CDMA is one of the major mobile communications standards and it has been widely deployed in Canada, the USA, Japan, Korea and the mainland China," an OFTA spokesman said. "With the launch of the CDMA2000 service in Hong Kong, visitors holding CDMA equipment can now enjoy CDMA2000 roaming services. This will strengthen Hong Kong's strategic position as a world city as well as the gateway between the mainland China and the world."

The Government promulgated the spectrum policy framework in April 2007, with one objective being to strengthen Hong Kong's strategic position as a world city and the gateway between the mainland China and the world.

As CDMA2000 is one of the major mobile communications standards adopted in many parts of the world, including the mainland China, the Telecommunications Authority decided in April 2007 to make available the spectrum in the 850MHz band for the provision of CDMA2000 service through an open auction.

In August 2007, OFTA invited applications to bid for the spectrum. A 15-year licence for such a service was to be issued to the successful bidder, PCCW, which was required to launch the CDMA2000 service on 20 November 2008.

Arbinet opens Hong Kong IP exchange

Telecommunications capacity trader, Arbinet, has expanded its IP services with a new Hong Kong IP Exchange.

It is located at the Mega-i data centre and is claimed to provide customers in Asia with a cost-effective way to connect with ISP suppliers and manage their relationships more efficiently by providing "a simple, scalable solution for quality IP transit supply for service providers such as ISPs, VoIP operators, ASPs, content and other IP application providers."

Arbinet expects its first group of buyers to connect in Hong Kong by the end of the year. Arbinet is also expanding the reach of this exchange to customers in the Sinofavour data centre. It expects to complete this expansion by December 2008.

Arbinet claims that, unlike traditional IP exchanges, its IP exchange enables buyers to purchase IP transit from multiple suppliers through a single connection, contract and bill thus providing a 'one-stop shop' for paid peering and IP transit from ISPs selling locally on Arbinet's Hong Kong exchange as well as its Los Angeles exchange.

For quality-sensitive or mission-critical applications, Arbinet also offers an optimisation solution for routing traffic based on near real-time quality metrics of jitter, latency and packet loss rather than traditional 'best effort' Internet routing.

"Hong Kong has emerged as the second largest Internet hub in Asia and is a vital gateway to China," commented Alan Mauldin, research director at TeleGeography. "Our research has indicated that intra-Asian Internet traffic has grown nearly 65 percent annually between 2004 and 2008."

Arbinet manages business relationships, back office operations and call routing for members who between them account for approximately two percent of the world's international voice traffic to over 1,300 destinations worldwide.

These members include fixed line, mobile, wholesale and VoIP carriers as well as calling card, ISPs and content providers around the world who buy and sell voice and IP telecommunications capacity and content.

South Korea

SK telink taps VeriSign for SMS interconnection

SK telink, SK Telecom's international carrier subsidiary, has selected VeriSign Messaging and Mobile Media, a division of VeriSign as its provider of open connectivity short message services (OCSMS).

According to VeriSign, the deal will broaden SK telink's SMS reach by roughly 45 million mobile subscribers in Korea and will make SK part of an OCSMS platform that already connects 600-plus carriers in more than 150 countries and more than 2.4 billion subscribers worldwide.

Through VeriSign OCSMS, SK telink will be able to exchange inter-carrier person-to-person text messages globally, across wireless carriers and devices.

SK telink's international SMS customers, which account for about 70 percent of market share in the international inter-carrier SMS of the three major mobile carriers in South Korea, will now be able to send and receive inter-carrier messages to more mobile subscribers globally.

VeriSign has signed 30 new OCSMS customers in Asia the last two quarters including Bayan Telecommunications of the Philippines and claims it was one of the first vendors to successfully meet the compliance criteria for open connectivity SMS hubbing solutions as defined by the GSMA, the operator-led trade association representing the global mobile industry.

The VeriSign OCSMS platform supports both IP and SS7 transport mediums to provide the flexibility for operators to exchange messages through a single connection to VeriSign.

Thailand

CAT picks Comverse for converged billing

CAT Telecom, Thailand's incumbent communications services provider, has deployed Comverse billing and mediation solutions to support its wireless CDMA and fixed line services.

They will replace CAT's legacy billing systems and will reduce complexity in CAT's BSS infrastructure while increasing market agility. During the implementation phase,

Comverse worked closely with several partners, including Infor and Subex Azure, to ensure smooth system integration.

"The Thai telecommunications market is in the throes of deregulation, and CAT has responded to this change by enhancing our mobile offering with sophisticated features and functionality," explained Jirayut Rungsrihong, SEVP and CFO of CAT.

According to Comverse, its billing solutions are optimised for the converging communications market, combining multiservice data mediation and billing with an advanced set of active customer management capabilities, including customer self-service, ordering and activation, real-time charging and payments. Comverse billing solutions have been widely adopted around the globe, enabling operators to grow revenues, build loyalty and reduce operating expenses.

"With the Comverse Billing Solution in place, CAT is able to better manage its existing subscribers and services, while gaining speed to market and the ability to rapidly introduce new features for full convergence down the road," said Eitan Achlow, president of Comverse Asia Pacific.

Technology

Telstra takes the lead in IPsphere Forum trials

Australia carrier, Telstra, has become the first carrier to implement a multi-site trial network that implements specifications developed by the IPsphere Forum designed to enable the delivery of IP services across network boundaries at agreed QoS levels, as opposed to the 'best effort' delivery of the Internet.

Telstra's trial network will be interconnected with similar, but smaller scale trial networks implemented by Telus, Telenor and Deutsche Telecom as part of a global showcase of the IPsphere Forum framework being during the TM Forum Management World, held in Orlando, Florida this week. (The IPsphere Forum merged with the TM (TeleManagement) Forum earlier this year.)

Telstra's trial network, between Sydney and Melbourne uses equipment and software from Juniper Networks and partner Net One Systems. It comprises Net One Systems' integration and software customisation capabilities and Juniper Networks routing and Session and Resource Control (SRC) portfolio.

For Telstra participation in the trial is an important step in its plan to develop an 'Application Assured Network' (AAN) - a network capable of dynamically dimensioning itself to support any customer application requirement, such as bandwidth, delay, jitter and QoS.

Ian Stanley, national manager, at Telstra, said: "The intelligent interaction between the network and service frameworks will be a critical success factor in the deployment of Application Assured Networking. Our multi-site IPsphere implementation enables us not only to test our own service delivery environment, but also to validate it with other service providers as part of the TM Forum's worldwide IPsphere field trial."

The IP Sphere Forum was created in mid 2005 by almost 40 companies - a who's who of global network equipment manufacturers and major carriers - with the ambitious goal of developing a new architecture for IP networks. It grew out of the Infranet Initiative, set up in 2003 by Juniper Networks, which in turn spawned the Infranet Initiative Council (IIC).

The key aim of the IPsphere Forum was to produce a specification that, when implemented in network hardware, software and management systems, would enable multiple parties responsible for creating and delivering a network service from end to

end to put in place the technical and commercial arrangements to deliver that service at agreed quality levels and to charge accordingly. The Forum took its first significant step towards achieving this goal with release the first version of its technical specification in mid 2007.

According to Tom Noelle CEO of CIMI Corporation, a consultant who has been closely involved with the IPsphere Forum over several years, "Every service provider in the world is looking for a standardised way to abstract service components, compose services across partner boundaries, and control service lifecycle processes using software.

"It's a recognised path to profit that raises revenues and manages cost. IPsphere is perhaps the standards-based approach that's most fully developed, and this demonstration proves it."

According to Andrew Coward, vice president, service provider marketing for Juniper Networks, in a paper presented at Terrapinn's Broadband World conference in Sydney earlier this month, service providers must develop new revenue sources in order to met the cost of the network infrastructure needed to support surging data traffic levels - core network capacity is predicted to quadruple in the next four years - and one in which revenue growth is driven by applications and IT services rather than network services.

Coward never mentioned the IPsphere Forum but it clearly underpinned the concepts set out in his presentation. He floated the idea of an "open garden" model one in which carriers add value to content hosted by themselves, partners or across the Internet in which they can add value to their own and partner content by guaranteeing service parameters to ensure an optimal user experience. "Experience is a value that only the network can deliver, Coward said.

Nortel aims to add unified comms to any application

Nortel has launched in Australia, as a prelude to rollout out elsewhere in Asia, its Agile Communication Environment, a set of software tools claimed to enable unified communications to be added to any business application.

ACE was formerly launched in the US in July and is now being rolled out in major Asia Pacific markets - Australia, New Zealand, India, China, according to Kirsten Gilbertson, leader, Next Generation Unified Networks, Nortel, Asia.

Nortel is following a path taken by Avaya when it launched its 'Communications Enabled Business Processes' (CEBP) in mid 2007 and by Cisco which last month identified the market for collaboration to be worth \$US7 billion per year on top of the \$US 27 billion unified communications market. Cisco is claiming that its new collaboration portfolio has been designed to "interoperate with business applications, communications devices and Web-based tools."

Nortel's ACE is based on open-standard service oriented architecture (SOA). It uses software plug ins or adaptors to "directly capture communication functionality from a company's voice and data network integrating it into a company's core business processes and supporting applications such as a unified communications platform from any of the leading desk-top vendors."

Nortel claims that "The key value of the solution is that it enables human-latency to be removed from the communications process, speeding the decision cycle and improving response times which provide critical competitive differentiation for companies." And Nortel CTO, Enterprise, Phil Edholm gave *Exchange* a compelling example of the gains that can be achieved by tying business processes to unified communications.

At a large hospital in the US the process of discharging a patient typically took seven hours because of the sign-offs required from the multiple personnel responsible for the patient's care and treatment. By adding UC functionality on top of the hospital's core systems the hospital was able to reduce this time to four hours.

Edholm said "The real value of this is that you get four hours of time back on every bed which is five to seven percent of each patient's stay. So you effectively get five to seven percent more beds. This means that for a million dollar investment what a 500 bed hospital got was \$25-30m worth of capital benefits because the hospital cost \$US1.5 million per bed to build."

Knowledge workers & information workers

Edholm claimed that, while traditional UC brought significant gains to knowledge workers it was of minimal benefit to the much larger population of information workers: those who spend the bulk of their work time in front of a screen working with business applications and interacting with others only when specific issues arise within their work processes.

"If you look at the world, about three billion people work. We estimate there are about 600-700 million information workers and about 120-150 million knowledge workers," Edholm said. "UC applies to knowledge workers as part their work and to information workers where exceptions occur; for example a call centre worker who needs to bring in an expert to solve a problem."

Nortel says it is planning an aggressive development schedule for its Agile Communication Environment platform, with regular updates released every 12 weeks following general availability in mid-November. The first release supports Cisco's Call Manager IP Telephony and Tandberg videoconferencing hardware, with support for Avaya and Polycom environments expected before the end of the year.

Pan Asia

Ben's broom sweeps through upper echelons of AlcaLu

Following the appointment its new CEO, Ben Verwaayen, Alcatel-Lucent has announced a new leadership team, claiming it to be "a nice blend of leaders coming from outside the company, new talents from inside the company and existing senior leaders".

Alcatel Lucent said the new appointments would support the company's new business model comprised of three regions: Americas; Europe, Middle East and Africa; and APAC. These will be headed by: Robert Vrij, president Americas; Adolfo Hernandez, president Europe, Middle East and Africa; and Etienne Fouques, president APAC.

Three newly created organisations will be headed by: Kenneth Frank, president Solutions and Marketing; Janet Davidson, president Quality and Customer Care; and Michel Rahier, president Operations.

Four new groups have been formed to "reflect the company's focus on open innovation led by Bell Labs, state-of-the-art product and software innovation as well as its continued momentum in services and enterprise markets.

These are : the Carrier Product Group, headed by Philippe Kerye; the President (Andy Williams); the Applications Software Group (Paul Segre - who will remain president and CEO of Genesys) Enterprise Product Group (Tom Burns). All will be part of the company's management committee together with Claire Pedini (Human Resources); Hubert de Pesquidoux (CFO) and Jeong Kim (president Bell Labs).

Ad-funded mobile entertainment to the rescue

Research published by the Mobile Entertainment Forum (MEF) suggests that ad-funded mobile entertainment (AFME) will help offset the revenues lost to piracy on mobile content such as games, music and ringtones in the South East Asian market.

"This will help grow the mobile entertainment industry in the region beyond 'network controlled' content such as ringback tones," according to MEF. Its definition of AFME is "The revenue generated through mobile advertising to subsidize or fully fund the cost of existing mobile entertainment to the consumer."

MEF's members-only report on 'Ad-Funded Mobile Entertainment: AFME's impact on SE Asia', forecasts that Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand will reach \$US2.6million in AFME revenue by 2013. "Although these revenues appear relatively small, they represent a significant amount of activity of 52 million click-throughs on AFME," MEF says. "In addition to protecting revenues, AFME will play an important role in the overall growth of the mobile entertainment market, with around 50 percent of AFME revenue being used to upsell other premium content by 2013."

Stefan Rust, MEF Asia chair said: "Our membership is telling us there are clear benefits to ad-funded content. This is not just replacing revenues lost through piracy but also helping to grow mobile entertainment revenues in the long-term. This growth in mobile entertainment revenues reflects a maturing mobile data market across Asia and will also drive innovation for mobile advertising to develop beyond messaging and banner advertisements."

Suhail Bhat, policy and initiatives director, added: "The Southeast Asia Report is the fifth AFME Report MEF has published this year following analyses on the UK, the US, France and India. The reports provide a realistic view of the potential of AFME and an exploration of effective business models to educate the marketplace and help our members further monetise the mobile content business."

Mobile Entertainment Forum names new Asian board

The Mobile Entertainment Forum has a new Asia board, with representation from Bharti Airtel, i-POP Networks, Netbiscuits, Paymo and Radius-ED.

The new board voted to elect Neeraj Roy of Hungama Mobile, as chairman and Faissal Houhou of Paymo, as vice-chairman. Outgoing chairman Stefan Rust was awarded an emeritus title in recognition of his leadership of MEF Asia since the inaugural elections in 2005.

Roy said: "I am delighted to see the formation of the new MEF Asia board, with representatives from all the stakeholders in the value chain. I would like to acknowledge the work and efforts of the outgoing chairman, Stefan Rust, and look at further developing mobile and digital entertainment in what is still the fastest growing region in the world - Asia.

"In many ways the need for an enhanced focus on mobile entertainment and value added services could not be more timely given the global economic environment. The MEF Asia board will work closely with the global, EMEA and Americas chapters and continue to bring innovation to the forefront of the telecom, media, entertainment and advertising industries."

The MEF exists to represent the interests of its global membership across the mobile entertainment value chain. Its goals are to build awareness, create business development opportunities and facilitate the development of commercial guidelines and best practices to promote a healthy and profitable industry.

The Forum has its global headquarters in London, a Hollywood-based Americas secretariat, an Asian chapter in Hong Kong and the newly expanded EMEA branch.